

# Shoshone Museum Reader

*Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.*

Fall 2009

Shoshone Museum  
Association  
P.O. Box 38  
Shoshone, CA 92384  
(760) 852-4524

Editor: Jennifer O. Viereck

*The second of a new series, If These Walls Could Talk . . .*  
**THE SHOSHONE MUSEUM BUILDING**  
By Judy Palmer and George Ross

Although its exact origins are shrouded in mystery, the Shoshone Museum is the oldest structure in town, and is probably over a hundred years of age. The most authoritative account of its early days is that of Celesta Brown Gilliam (one of the grandchildren of Ralph “Dad” and Celestia Fairbanks) and her son, Vance Gilliam.<sup>1</sup> The building is said to have originally served as a hospital in Greenwater. Lumber being scarce on the desert, boomtown buildings were often “recycled” and transported to a new site of activity. The Fairbanks family dismantled many of the buildings in Greenwater and moved them to Shoshone in 1910.<sup>2</sup> However, this building was first moved to the town of Zabriskie (a Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad station stop) where it was used as a union hall and store. “Dad” and “Ma” Fairbanks may have also operated a restaurant in Zabriskie, although it is unknown if they used this building.<sup>3</sup>



The hospital at Greenwater (with ramp, behind tent) about 1908



About 1920, the building was moved to Shoshone where it became the home of the Fairbanks and Brown general store.<sup>4</sup> According to Stella Brown’s diary, the gas pump shown in the 1929 Frasher photograph was installed in 1923.<sup>5</sup>

In Shoshone, the building served as general store, post office and social center for 30 years.<sup>6</sup> A bench on the south side of the

*Continued on next page...*

**ANNUAL QUILT RAFFLE!**  
to Benefit Shoshone Museum

**Tickets \$1, or 6 for \$5**  
Send a check for yours today!

**Drawing Noon Sunday**  
Don't have to be present to win!

*Rose pattern quilt made by  
Dort Fredericks & Victoria Brazzle*

## OLD WEST DAYS

Oct. 30–Nov. 1

### Craft Show in the Flower Building

11:00 am on: Crowbar patio program includes dancing, music and deep pit mesquite smoked barbeque. Entertainment throughout the day and into the night. Halloween costume contest featuring a \$200 prize for the best costume at the evening concert at the Crowbar.

### Museum History Talks—see page 2

Relive local history! Meet local authors and purchase autographed books for yourself or as gifts.

### DV Chamber Getaways Auction

At 5:00 pm, the Death Valley Chamber ‘Desert Dream Getaways’ Auction will offer a chance to win tee times, fantastic vacation packages, gift certificates, baskets of goodies and more, with professional auctioneer Robin Randolph-Durand.

## OLD WEST DAYS '09 HISTORY TALKS SCHEDULE

AT THE SHOSHONE MUSEUM  
Moderator: George Ross

Talks are free, but donations are really a help! A keepsake booklet about presenters and sponsors of History Talks will be available for a \$5 donation. *See you there!*

### Friday, October 30

5:00- 7:00 pm - RECEPTION  
6:00 pm - Welcome, Presentations

Keynote Address - **TONOPAH & TIDE-  
WATER RAILROAD** - David Lowe

### Saturday, October 31

1:00 pm - **THE HISTORY OF THE  
TIMBISHA SHOSHONE** - Barbara  
Durham and Leah Bonstead

1:45 pm - **TALL TALES OF DEATH  
VALLEY** - Jean Johnson

2:15 pm - **SLAVE TRADE ON THE  
OLD SPANISH TRAIL** - Cliff  
Walker

2:45 pm - **BREAK**

3:00 pm - **TALES OF TECOPA** - Mary  
Lou Walbergh

3:30 pm - **MEMOIRS OF A DESERT  
BRAT** - Dixie Ross Collins

### Sunday, November 1

10:00 am - 12:00 pm - Speakers and authors  
available for additional book signing  
in front of the Museum.



Brown General Store and "the  
bench" about 1940

(Continued from page 1)

building served as a gathering place where the locals sat and socialized.

After a new general store was constructed in 1949,<sup>7</sup> the building was vacant until about 1960 when a miner, Steve Demick, opened an eclectic Rock Shop and Museum known as the "Gold Mine."<sup>8</sup> Leon Noyes, another local miner, took over the operation in 1969, after he had retired from his job at the Nevada Test Site.<sup>9</sup>



The "Gold Mine" Rock Shop and  
museum about 1970

After Leon's death in 1986, the building became the Shoshone Museum.<sup>10</sup> The first director was Dixie Ross Collins, daughter of George Ross (a native of Shoshone) and his wife, Edith. Subsequent improvements included an extensive remodeling in 1995, and the addition of the "Mammoth Room" in 1998 to house fossilized mammoth remains discovered by geology students from Sonoma State University.<sup>11</sup>

The Shoshone Museum building has served the desert community in many ways over its long life. Although the museum association is planning a larger new facility to meet the future needs of the region, this old building will remain an important link to Shoshone's colorful past.

<sup>1</sup> Rook, Stella and Nolt D: Shoshone, Amargosa Days brochure, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Schafer, Leo: Death Valley Ghost Town, Book Connection, LLC, Las Vegas, 2003, pg 237-8.

<sup>3</sup> Grantham, D. W.: Desert Magazine, Nov 1984, pg 19.

<sup>4</sup> Inyo Tax Records, parcel 46-120; Amargosa Days brochure 1981; Myrick David F: Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California, Volume II, Howell-North Books, Berkeley, 1963, pg 588.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, Stella: Diary, 1944.

<sup>6</sup> Inyo Tax Records, parcel 46-120; Stella Brown diary, 1944.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, Stella: Diary, Dec 22, 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Ross, George; Ross Collins, Dixie; Ross, Ila; Messer, Ethel: personal communications, Shoshone, CA, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, Susie Q: Amargosa Days brochure, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> Sorrells, Susan: personal communication, Shoshone, CA, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Watkins, Martha: Death Valley Fall Festival, Amargosa News and Views, Oct-Nov, 1995.



## Echoes from the Archives



As the long days of summer are replaced by a crisp feel of fall, the social life in the towns of Tecopa, Tecopa Hot Springs and Shoshone begins to reunite the residents of the communities after several months of summer vacations and other distractions from the summer

heat. In September members of many of the important community organizations such as the Southern Inyo Fire District, the Amargosa Conservancy, the Tecopa Basin Artists Group and the Shoshone Museum have been meeting to plan for an educational and entertaining winter season.

The calendar for the month of October in the Amargosa Basin is indicative of the events that will take place in our area throughout the year. **On October 17<sup>th</sup>, the Southern Inyo District is having its annual Firehouse Fling** at the Tecopa Hot Springs Resort to raise funds for our dedicated volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians. The event includes a barbeque and auction as well as many other activities, such as booths representing our local organizations.

The following weekend, the **Amargosa Conservancy is hosting a party on the patio of the Crowbar Café in Shoshone on October 24<sup>th</sup>** to celebrate the legislation that was passed this spring in Congress that designates the Amargosa as a Wild and Scenic River. This legislation will include the Amargosa River, from Shoshone to Dumont Dunes, in the National Landscape Conservation System, which protects and stewards national monuments and historical trails as well as other national treasures. The celebration continues to **October 25<sup>th</sup> with a hike led by Brian Brown down the spectacular Amargosa Canyon.**

**October 30<sup>th</sup>, October 31<sup>st</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> is Old West Days**, a tradition in the Amargosa area since the 1950's. The celebration also kicks off the **Death Valley 49ers Centennial in Death Valley** which first took place in 1949 to honor the memory of the struggle of the 49ers who crossed Death Valley in 1849. The celebration is centered around Death Valley and lasts for a week with many educational and

### WINTER MUSEUM HOURS:

Open 9 :00 am-4:00 pm Daily

***The Mission of the Shoshone Museum Association is to tell the unique story of the Amargosa region and to preserve its cultural and natural history.***

fun events such as hikes, 4 wheel drive treks, art shows, artists' breakfasts, and book signings.

Old West Days in Shoshone begins on Friday evening with the opening of the History Talks at the Shoshone Museum. After the reception at the museum, the festivities continue to the Crowbar with entertainment by Desert Song, an incredible ensemble from Furnace Creek featuring classical, jazz and blues. On Saturday the history conference proceedings begin again and continue throughout the day. The conference will be complemented by several important desert authors who will be signing their books during the conference. In addition there will be a spinning demonstration joined by other demonstrations of historical arts and crafts. For those interested in buying modern day crafts, the craft show next to the Flower Building also opens Saturday morning for the weekend.

At 11:00 am, the festivities will begin in the Crowbar patio, including dancing, music and deep pit mesquite smoked barbeque. There will be a variety of entertainment throughout the day and into the night. Around 5:00 pm, **the Death Valley Chamber 'Desert Dream Getaways' Auction** will offer a chance to win all kinds of treats from member businesses.

Since this year the Saturday celebrations of Old West Days falls on **Halloween, there will be a costume contest featuring a \$200 prize** for the best costume at the evening concert at the Crowbar.

By Sunday morning, after a weekend of music, friendship, new and old, history and great food there is time for final conversations and goodbyes. I invite you to join us for a month filled with fun and adventure in Amargosa and also to watch for other events and adventures throughout the year in our communities.

—Susan Sorrells, Board President

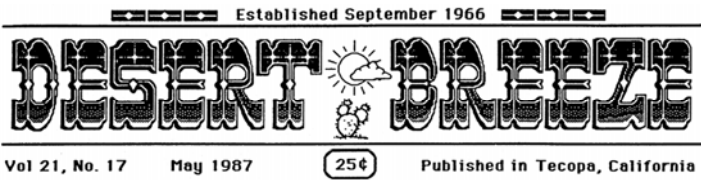
# SMA Membership Form

## Membership Dues

Individual	\$15
Family	\$25
Business/	\$50
Nonprofit	
Cougar	\$300
Mammoth	\$500
Donation:	\$ _____

Make checks payable to:  
Shoshone Museum Association.  
Mail to:  
P.O. Box 38  
Shoshone, CA 92384  
*OR*  
Pay by phone using your Visa or Master Card!  
(760) 852-4524

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email for events: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Returning Member: \_\_\_ New Member: \_\_\_



OLD ISSUES OF DESERT BREEZE  
 SOUGHT BY SHOSHONE MUSEUM

The Shoshone museum is seeking copies of the old Desert Breeze newsletter published by Leland Gritzner in Tecopa from 1966 until 1987. It was done on a typewriter and by hand, mimeographed, and usually about 2 double-sided pages. We have copies of some issues, but would like to complete the set. We will photocopy the originals and return them to you (or if you prefer, send us the photocopies). The newsletter contained local gossips, obituaries and article of historical interest and is a valuable local history resource.



The Shoshone Museum Association  
 P.O. Box 38, Shoshone, CA 92384  
 (760) 852-4524 [shoshonemus@veawb.coop](mailto:shoshonemus@veawb.coop)

**Don't Miss Shoshone's  
 OLD WEST DAYS!**  
 Friday-Sunday,  
 Oct. 30-Nov. 1

